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May 14, 2014



The Leadership
Conference

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Conyers
Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Goodlatte and Ranking Member Conyers:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and its undersigned board of directors, we urge you to take needed action to protect all voters by advancing the Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014 (VRAA) (H.R. 3899) through the congressional process. Voters everywhere are vulnerable to discrimination, and now is the time for Congress to give this issue the attention it deserves.

Right now the right to vote for all is under grave threat. Last year, the Supreme Court's decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* struck down a key section of the Voting Rights Act that had helped states, counties, and towns to get ahead of potential discrimination. In particular, the Court struck down Section 4 of the Act, which determined which states would fall under the "preclearance" provisions. In its decision, the Court invited Congress to act, with Chief Justice Roberts writing in the majority that "Congress may draft another formula based on current conditions."

The Voting Rights Amendment Act is a modern, flexible, nationwide approach to protecting voters that embodies the spirit and letter of the Court's decision. This bipartisan bill fills a dangerous void in current protections. Since the Court's decision, towns and counties across the country have considered or implemented practices that would result in discrimination against certain voters. The proposed legislation would provide modern tools that ensure transparency and fairness in elections at all levels of government.

Now is the time to act. All of the undersigned organizations believe that this bill is an important step toward ensuring the right to vote is protected – freely and fairly – for all voters. We are unified in our belief that advancing this bill through the congressional process is essential to creating a modern, forward-looking Voting Rights Act for the 21st century. Congress must move the proposed legislation forward and that process begins with a hearing and markup of the bill.



Voting is the language of American democracy: if you don't vote, you don't count. This principle has been echoed time and again by resounding bipartisan majorities in Congress and by presidents from both sides of the aisle. The issue of voting rights has historically been, and will forever be, bipartisan.

The House Judiciary Committee cannot shrink from this historic obligation. We call on you to advance this bipartisan bill through a hearing, followed by a markup in due course. These steps will give this issue the urgent attention it deserves. Our request is simple but urgent: give this bill the benefit of a full-throated congressional debate.

Every day you fail to act, voters everywhere are left vulnerable to discrimination. We are counting on you to provide modern, flexible 21st century protections to every American voter – today and for generations to come.

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Bornstein, legal director and senior legal advisor, at 202-263-2856 or bornstein@civilrights.org or Nancy Zirkin, executive vice president at 202-263-2880 or zirkin@civilrights.org. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights Board of Directors

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Wade Henderson
President & CEO

cc: The Honorable John Boehner, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Eric Cantor, House Majority Leader
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, House Majority Whip
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, House Democratic Leader
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, House Democratic Whip
The Honorable James Clyburn, Assistant Democratic Leader